

Whose Grain Is Being Shipped From Ukraine?

Column: Economics

Region: Ukraine in the world



A great humanitarian uproar in recent weeks demanding the safe shipping of Ukrainian grain to ease a hunger crisis in Africa and elsewhere is deceptive on many levels. Not the least is who owns the land on which the grain is grown and whether that grain is actually illegal GMO patented corn and other grains. A corrupt Zelenskyy regime has quietly made deals with the major GMO agribusiness companies in the West who have been stealthily taking control of some of the world's most productive "black earth" farmland.

The 2014 CIA Coup

In February 2014 a US Government-backed coup d'état forced the elected president of Ukraine to flee for his life to Russia. In December 2013 President Viktor Yanukovich had announced following months of debate that Ukraine would join the Russian Eurasian Economic Union on promise of a \$15 billion Russian purchase of Ukraine state debt and 33% reduction in cost of imported Russian gas.

The competing offer had been a paltry "associate membership" in the EU tied to Ukraine acceptance of a draconian IMF and World Bank loan package that would force the privatization of Ukraine's invaluable agriculture land, allow planting GMO crops, as well as imposing severe pension cuts and social austerity. In return for a \$17 billion IMF loan, Ukraine would also have to raise personal income taxes by as much as 66% and to pay 50% more for natural gas. Workers would have to work ten years longer to get pensions. The aim was to open Ukraine to "foreign investment." The usual IMF rape of the economy on behalf of globalist corporate interests.

A key provision of the US and IMF demands on the post-coup government of US-picked Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, a leader of the CIA-backed Maidan protests against Yanukovich, was to finally open Ukraine's rich agriculture land to foreign Agribusiness giants, above all GMO giants including Monsanto and DuPont. Three of the Yatsenyuk cabinet, including the key Finance and Economy ministers, were foreign nationals, dictated to Kiev by the US State Department's Victoria Nuland and then-Vice President Joe Biden. The Washington imposed IMF loan conditions required that Ukraine also reverse its ban on genetically engineered crops, and enable private corporations like Monsanto to plant its GMO seeds and spray the fields with Monsanto's Roundup.

Since Ukraine declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, keeping control of Ukraine's precious "black earth" land has been one of the most heated issues in national politics. Recent polls show 79% of Ukrainians want to retain control of their land from foreign takeover. Ukraine, as southern Russia, is home to valuable black earth or chernozems, a dark, humus-rich soil that is very productive and needs little artificial fertilizer.

2001 Moratorium

A 2001 Ukraine law imposed a moratorium on private sale of farmland to larger companies or foreign investors. The moratorium was to halve buy up by corrupt Ukrainian oligarchs and their leasing to foreign agribusiness of the rich farmlands. By then Monsanto and other Western agribusiness had made significant inroads into Ukraine.

When Ukraine left the Soviet Union in 1991, farmers who had worked on the Soviet collective farms were each given small plots of the land. To prevent sale of the plots to hungry foreign agribusiness, the 2001 moratorium was voted. Seven million Ukrainian farmers own small plots totaling some 79 million acres. The remaining 25 million acres were owned by the state. Cultivation of GMO crops was strictly illegal.

Despite the moratorium, Monsanto, DuPont, Cargill and other Western GMO purveyors secretly and illegally began spreading their patented GMO seeds in the black earth of Ukraine. Small landowners would lease their land to large Ukrainian oligarchs, who in turn would enter secret agreements with Monsanto and others to plant GMO corn and soybeans. By the end of 2016 according to a now-deleted US Department of Agriculture report, about 80% of Ukraine's soybeans, and 10% of corn, were **grown illegally** from genetically modified seed. The Zelenskyy 2021 law has allowed this open door to GMO to be vastly expanded.

Enter the Comedian

In May 2019 Volodymyr Zelenskyy, a Ukrainian TV comedian, a protégé of notoriously corrupt Ukraine oligarch, Igor Kolomoisky, was elected President in a tragic popular revolt "against government corruption." One of Zelenskyy's first acts in 2019 was to try to overturn the 2001 land moratorium. Farmers and citizens staged huge protests throughout 2020 to block the changes proposed by Zelenskyy.

Finally, taking advantage of the covid lockdown restrictions and bans on public protests, in May 2021 Zelenskyy signed Bill No. 2194 deregulating land, calling it the "key" to the "farmland market." He was right. In a sneaky move to calm farmer opposition, Zelenskyy claimed the new law allows only Ukrainian citizens to buy or sell the valuable farmland in the first few years. He did not mention the huge loophole allowing foreign-owned companies like Monsanto (today part of Bayer AG) or DuPont (now Corteva), or other companies which have been operating in Ukraine more than three years, to also buy the **desired land**.

The 2021 law also gave ownership to notoriously corrupt municipal and village governments who can change the land purpose. After January 2024 Ukraine citizens as well as corporations can buy up to 10,000 hectares of land. And in April, 2021 amendment to the land market law—"On Amendments to the Land Code of Ukraine and other Legislative Acts concerning the improvement of the management system and deregulation in the field of land relations"—opened another huge loophole for foreign agribusiness to take control of the rich Ukraine black earth. The amendment circumvents the ban on sale of land to foreigners by changing the purpose of the land, say from cropland to commercial land. Then it can be sold to anyone, including foreigners who can in turn repurpose it to farmland. Zelenskyy signed the bill and went back on his campaign pledge to hold a **national referendum** on any change in land ownership.

Should there be any doubt as to interest of US GMO-linked agribusiness in grabbing Ukraine prime farmland, a look at the current Board of Directors of the US-Ukraine Business Council is instructive. It includes the largest private grain and agribusiness giant in the world, Cargill. It includes Monsanto/Bayer which owns patented GMO seeds and the deadly pesticide, Roundup. It includes Corteva, the huge GMC fusion of DuPont and Dow Chemicals. It includes fellow grain cartel giants Bunge and Louis Dreyfus. It includes the major **farm equipment** maker John Deere.

These were the powerful agribusiness corporations reportedly behind Zelenskyy's betrayal of his election promise. With Bayer/Monsanto Corteva and Cargill already controlling a reported 16.7 million hectares of prime Ukraine black earth farmland, and with a de facto bribe from the IMF and World Bank, Zelenskyy's government caved in and sold out. The result will be very bad for the future of what was until recently the "breadbasket of Europe." With Ukraine now being pried open by the GMO cartel companies, it leaves only Russia which banned GMO crops in 2016 as the only major world grain supplier without GMO. The EU is reportedly working on a new law that would overturn the long-established critical approval process for GMO crops and open the floodgates there to the GMO takeover.

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